

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 073

CG 020 436

AUTHOR Rayburn, Carole A.; And Others  
TITLE Nuns, Brothers, and the Religion and Stress Questionnaire.  
SPONS AGENCY American Association of Univ. Women Educational Foundation, Washington, D.C.  
PUB DATE 86  
NOTE 21p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Catholics; Church Workers; Clergy; \*Coping; Females; \*Nuns; Religion; \*Sex Differences; \*Stress Management

## ABSTRACT

Women have been entering into religious leadership positions in larger numbers, although the field is still male-dominated. Stress and strain of both men and women in the field of religion has been experienced from the impact of such change. In this study, Roman Catholic nuns, who have not been seen by their own church as clerical workers or even in the same religious professional track as religious brothers, were compared to brothers on stress and strain, as well as on coping mechanisms. The 51 nuns and 50 brothers completed the Religion and Stress Questionnaire. Ten percent of each group was interviewed in some depth to further explore their stress and needs. The nuns had far better rational/coping mechanisms and yet the brothers had better overall sensitivity toward women in religious leadership roles and in congregations than did the nuns. One possible explanation for this is that the nuns had learned to cope with their being a minority group in a male-dominated church and field by turning away from the realities of women in religious occupations and inwardly to their supportive group of women in communal living. (The Religion and Stress Questionnaire is included.) (Author)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

ED290073

CG 020436

NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION  
AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Carole A. Rayburn, Lee J. Richmond, and Lynn Rogers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.
- ☒ Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-  
ment do not necessarily represent official  
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carole A.

Rayburn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT---NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Women have been entering into religious leadership positions in larger numbers, though the field is still male-dominated. Stress and strain of both men and women in the field of religion has been experienced from the impact of such change. In the current study, Roman Catholic nuns, who have not been seen by their own Church as clerical workers or even in the same religious professional track as brothers, are compared to brothers on stress and strain, as well as on coping mechanisms. The 51 nuns and the 50 brothers were given the specially devised Religion and Stress Questionnaire (Rayburn & Richmond, 1982, 1986) and then 10% of each group was interviewed in some depth to better understand their stress and needs. The nuns had far better rational/coping mechanisms and yet the brothers had better overall sensitivity toward women in religious leadership roles and in congregations than did the nuns. Perhaps the nuns have learned to cope with their being a minority group in a male-dominated church and field by turning away from the realities of women in religious occupations and inwardly to their supportive group of women in communal living.

# NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Carole A. Rayburn, Ph.D., M. Div.  
Silver Spring, Md.

Lee J. Richmond, Ph.D.  
Johns Hopkins University

Lynn Rogers, Ed.D. Cand.  
Johns Hopkins University

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, nuns and brothers have been religious leaders within the Roman Catholic Church who have had no priestly responsibilities, such as administering the sacraments or hearing confessions. Indeed, nuns have been most usually regarded by the Roman Catholic parishioner as religious laypersons but not in a special religious leadership class. Both nuns and brothers have historically worked as teachers in schools, as hospital personnel, and as direct assistants to priests.

Yet, are these religious leaders, though non-clergy, to be considered out of the mainstream of influence on the women and men in the congregation and insulated from and thus unstressed by the changes taking place within their own denomination and other religious settings concerning new inroads of women into religious leadership positions? What about national organizations within the ranks of the nuns, such as National Coalition of American Nuns and the Women's Ordination Conference, which have as a goal the ordination of women into the priesthood? How has this affected the average nun and brother, and what does the thinking and feeling about women religious leaders mean in terms of how they relate to women, young children, and their own orders of sisters or brothers? Do they have an ethical, if not a moral, obligation to atune themselves to new alternatives for

This research project was made possible in part by a grant from the Educational Foundation Program of the American Association of University Women.

females within even the confines of the Roman Catholic Church?

Since nuns and brothers are often involved in pastoral and other counseling and psychotherapy, it is imperative that their concept of the wholeness of functioning for females as well as males be strong and present at all times. The nuns are models for both female and male youth, and it is vital that they portray an image of not only a religious but a strong and able individual. Otherwise, what they pass on to others may be a less than potent persona, the traditional female in an inferior role in the patriarchal system. This message will not be of any real benefit to anyone, least of all themselves.

Counselors and psychotherapists could be of great help to sisters and brothers in aiding them in resolving any difficulties which they may have in understanding themselves and the more modern woman better, in serving as psychotherapy and counseling supervisors for them, as well as consultants. Brothers who may imagine that they are counseling young boys and men in a social vacuum will have a rude awakening when they realize that these individuals must relate to others in the secular world at some time or other. If those in their care are to truly develop to their fullest, they must be made aware by nuns and brothers what some of the current thinking of females outside and within the church is. This is so, whether or not they themselves agree with such alternatives. They are responsible for teaching their students to cope as well with life as possible; this includes understanding the new revolution taking place within the church by females, and certainly within the secular world.

METHODOLOGY

The Religion and Stress Questionnaire, devised by Rayburn and Richmond (1982), was used to study responses of religious leaders. In this study, 51 nuns and 50 brothers from a large metropolitan area responded to the following 16 item Questionnaire:

1. Do you think women sense more need to excel than men?
2. What effect do you think being in a sexual minority has upon female seminarians, ministers, priests, and rabbis?
3. Do you have any experience of women being treated as a novelty to be tolerate in seminary?
4. Do women have equal opportunities for recruitment interviews and actual hiring on church/synagogue staffs?
5. What pressures do you think women feel who are in high levels of leadership?
6. Do you think women experience suspicion or rejection from colleagues and/or congregations?
7. Because they dare to be female leaders in a predominantly male enterprise, do you think they get blamed for going against the tide?
8. How do women experience stress from institutional and personal pressure at work?
9. How do women handle work related stress?
10. Do you think women handle stress differently than their male counterparts?
- 11a. What do you think about using less gender-bound language in church/synagogue texts and hymnals?
- 11b. Do you plan to use more inclusive language for men and women when you work in your religious setting?

11c. Is there any change in language that is particularly offensive to you?

12a. What do you think and feel about women in ministry/rabbinate/congregation using their birth names?

12b. For women, would you prefer to use your birth name?

12c. Is your religious setting accepting of women using their birth names?

#### RESULTS

Surprisingly, the brothers had better overall sensitivity toward women in religious leadership roles and in congregations than did the nuns. Actually, in some cases their scores were very close to each other. In a previous study (Rayburn, Richmond, & Rogers, 1986), the brothers showed less sensitivity to the needs of women and stresses on them than did the nuns. However, this was based on a five item comparison for the Religion and Stress Questionnaire instead of the full 16 items as in this study.

More than a slight difference between group scores was found for brothers being more sensitive to the negative effect that being in a sexual minority has on women religious leaders; to the awareness that women experience more suspicion or rejection at times; to women religious leaders being more negatively stressed from work pressure. However, brothers were <sup>prone to</sup> see women as handling work-related stress less well; about using more inclusive language in church texts and hymnals and in their own settings. They were more likely to be offended by some language changes than the nuns would be. Brothers felt more positive about women religious leaders using their birth names but they were much less

apt to see their religious setting as accepting of women using their birth names.

The nuns were more sensitive to women religious leaders being blamed for going against tradition. Fewer nuns than brothers affirmed that women have equal opportunities for recruitment interviews and actual hiring on church staffs; however, more nuns than brothers were unsure about this matter, and about as many nuns as brothers answered in the negative to this item. Too, while the number of nuns and brothers was almost equal for seeing negative pressure on women in high levels of leadership, many more nuns than brothers saw this pressure as a positive effect. The nuns also considered the stress that women experience from institutional and personal pressure at work as positive in effect. Consistent to this pattern, they saw more often an overall positive way of women's handling work-related stress (interestingly, they also were much more likely to see the negative effects as well). About the same number of nuns and brothers answered that they did not think that women handled stress differently than their male counterparts (about 52% in each case).

The nuns were far less positive about using less gender-bound language in church texts and hymnals and about planning to use more inclusive language for men and women in their own religious settings. However, they were far less likely to respond that they found any changes in language that were particularly offensive to them. On the question of birth names, the nuns were less positive about women in religious leadership positions and in congregations using their birth names. However, almost half of the nuns (48.4%) indicated that they would prefer to use

their birth names. However, since most nuns enter the novitiate as single persons, this may not have been a real choice for them. Since they did answer that they more often favored other women using their birth names, however, it would appear that they favored the practice in general for all women. There was an almost overwhelming affirmation from nuns (94%) that their religious setting accepted women using their birth names, with none of the nuns negating this and only 6% answering that they did not know.

-----  
Insert Table 1 about here.  
-----

#### DISCUSSION

Nuns and brothers do not attend seminary but instead live in a community in which life is less competitive than in secular living arrangements. However, while both of these groups experience much support, they also lack privacy in most cases. Many described this as "living in a fish bowl" (Rayburn, Richmond, & Rogers, 1982, 1983, 1986).

Both groups had similar responses to whether women sense more need to excel than men, which perhaps reflects most directly that they may have taken their point of reference from the nuns as a large group of women in the church. If nuns in general are not usually viewed as being competitive or needing to excel, it is possible that some of the brothers and nuns may have overgeneralized from this. Surely, neither of these religious leaders, at least in the majority, see themselves as being in competition with priests but rather as assisting them.

# NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-7-

TABLE I

## NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

|                                                                                                                                        | <u>Nuns</u><br>(N=51) | <u>Brothers</u><br>(N=50) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Do you think women sense more need to excel than men?                                                                               |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 58.3                  | 60.6                      |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 19.4                  | 12.2                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 22.2                  | 27.3                      |
| 2. What effect do you think being in a sexual minority has upon female seminarians, ministers, priests, and rabbis?                    |                       |                           |
| Positive                                                                                                                               | 12.9                  | 0.0                       |
| Negative                                                                                                                               | 54.8                  | 63.3                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 32.3                  | 36.7                      |
| 3. Do you have any experience of women being treated as a novelty to be tolerated in seminary?                                         |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 11.8                  | 9.4                       |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 70.5                  | 71.9                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 17.6                  | 18.8                      |
| 4. Do women have equal opportunities for recruitment in-interviews and actual hiring on church/synagogue staffs?                       |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 29.7                  | 37.5                      |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 40.5                  | 43.7                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 29.7                  | 18.8                      |
| 5. What pressures do you think women feel who are in high levels of leadership?                                                        |                       |                           |
| Positive                                                                                                                               | 19.5                  | 3.3                       |
| Negative                                                                                                                               | 60.9                  | 63.4                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 19.5                  | 33.3                      |
| 6. Do you think women experience suspicion or rejection from colleagues and/or congregations?                                          |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 65.0                  | 72.7                      |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 20.0                  | 15.1                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 15.0                  | 12.1                      |
| 7. Because they dare to be female leaders in a predominantly male enterprise, do you think they get blamed for going against the tide? |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 67.5                  | 50.0                      |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 18.9                  | 28.2                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 13.5                  | 21.9                      |
| 8. How do women experience stress from institutional and personal pressure at work?                                                    |                       |                           |
| Positively                                                                                                                             | 38.9                  | 4.8                       |
| Negatively                                                                                                                             | 30.6                  | 57.1                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 30.6                  | 38.1                      |
| 9. How do women handle work related stress?                                                                                            |                       |                           |
| Positively                                                                                                                             | 75.6                  | 31.6                      |
| Negatively                                                                                                                             | 19.5                  | 10.5                      |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                                                     | 4.9                   | 57.9                      |
| 10. Do you think women handle stress differently than their male counterparts?                                                         |                       |                           |
| Yes                                                                                                                                    | 48.7                  | 48.0                      |
| No                                                                                                                                     | 51.2                  | 52.0                      |

NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-8-

TABLE I

(Continued)

|                                                                                                            | <u>Nuns</u> | <u>Brothers</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 11a. What do you think about using less gender-bound language in church/synagogue texts and hymnals?       |             |                 |
| Positive                                                                                                   | 50.6        | 82.6            |
| Negative                                                                                                   | 27.3        | 8.6             |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 12.1        | 8.7             |
| 11b. Do you plan to use more inclusive language for men and women when you work in your religious setting? |             |                 |
| Yes                                                                                                        | 57.6        | 100.0           |
| No                                                                                                         | 27.3        | 0.0             |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 15.2        | 0.0             |
| 11c. Is there any change in language that is particularly offensive to you?                                |             |                 |
| Yes                                                                                                        | 15.6        | 47.8            |
| No                                                                                                         | 81.3        | 43.4            |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 3.1         | 8.7             |
| 12a. What do you think and feel about women in ministry/rabbinate/congregation using their birth names?    |             |                 |
| Positive                                                                                                   | 59.4        | 63.6            |
| Negative                                                                                                   | 21.9        | 4.5             |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 18.8        | 31.8            |
| 12b. For women, would you prefer to use your birth name?                                                   |             |                 |
| Yes                                                                                                        | 48.4        | 0.0             |
| No                                                                                                         | 38.7        | 0.0             |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 12.9        | 100.0           |
| 12c. Is your religious setting accepting of women using their birth name?                                  |             |                 |
| Yes                                                                                                        | 94.1        | 63.2            |
| No                                                                                                         | 0.0         | 0.0             |
| Don't Know/Neutral                                                                                         | 5.9         | 36.8            |

Nonetheless, over 58% of each group answered this item in the affirmative. As to having an experience of women being treated as a tolerated novelty in seminary, both groups seem to have responded from the fact they the Roman Catholic seminaries have not had any women (except for a very few cases in which women hopeful of better opportunities in the future attended Jesuit seminaries).

While over 55% of both groups thought that women being a sexual minority in religious leadership positions had a negative effect upon them, the nuns were lower on this score than were the brothers. Perhaps the nuns were seeing being in a sexual minority as a more prized, esteemed, special, and protected class of women. Too, they may have thought that a minority is deferred to by the majority at times, since the majority---men in religious leadership roles---had no reason to fear competition or challenge from most of the nuns. Moreover, the average nun may well be a woman who is not too assertive even before she enters the novitiate.

The nuns were less positive about gender-bound language in texts and hymnals, which would necessitate a change from the traditional language. Nor were they willing to assert themselves by initiating the use of more inclusive language. To do so would draw attention to them, and they may as a group be more passive than assertive. Nevertheless, a significantly smaller number of the nuns (16%) indicated that they would personally be offended by any changes in language than would the brothers (48%) be. Perhaps this tells us that, while the nuns would not oppose changes in language which would reflect more inclusion of women in the presently masculine terms in church texts and

## NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-10-

hymnals, they are unwilling to call attention to themselves; to receive possible blame and being labeled as "trouble-makers" or "women's libbers;" and most importantly they may fear giving the impression that they are challenging the male image of God which the pope declared (stating that women could not possibly ever be candidates for the ordained priesthood because Christ was a male and no woman could image a male Christ).

A sampling of responses from the nuns and brothers will give a flavor of their thinking on the role of women in their church and on churches in general. On the question of women's need to excel, a 26 year old brother spoke of women wanting to excel more than men because they need "to show they're capable and able in an area of study not always open to women." Another brother, 44, thought that women needed to excel more "because with all the noise about whether or not they have what it takes, women must feel a subtle or not so subtle pressure to excel." A nun, 35, indicated that women were "probably still proving their equality." A 61 year old nun answered that women did not sense a greater need to excel in seminary: "If they truly feel called and they're qualified, there is no need to have to prove themselves."

On the question of recruitment and hiring opportunities, a 26 year old brother said that he doubted that women had equal access, but that they seemed to be making "remarkable inroads to staffs, even though religions tend to be traditional and hire men for staffs." A brother, 44, saw the situation for women as unequal but improving: "The chaplain at our all male home for boys in New York City is a woman. It has always been a priest (before)." A nun, 35, said that there is no equal access

at present in the Catholic Church, while a 35 year old nun said that equal access would depend on how liberal the employer is. Another nun, 61, noted that "since this is a relatively new field open to women, it will involve more risks on both sides."

On the question of women experiencing suspicion or rejection from colleagues and/or congregation, a 58 year old nun responded, "Yes---many feel---why are they bothering, they could do a great job doing what we've been doing for years." A 75 year old nun answered, "Possible." A 52 year old nun said, "In my present situation, I don't. However, I have in the past and feel most women do." A brother, 41, said, "Yes, similar to that experienced by other types of minorities." A 61 year old brother who had been a brother for three years said, "Cannot answer as I have never experienced seminary life and women."

On the item about women leaders being blamed for going against tradition, a nun, 52, responded, "I and my religious community have been called 'women's libbers,' etc. by bishops and priests, because we spoke out on matters of injustice that we witnessed." Another nun, 65, said, "At times I think they do." A nun, 58, said, "Oh! Yes!"

On the question of women being treated as a novelty to be tolerated in seminary, a 52 year old nun answered, "I attended summer sessions for five years in a seminary, earned 30 credits in theology (moral, dogma), but degree was called 'religious studies,' not theology degree like men receive." A 58 year old nun said, "Yes, one of my friends taught in the seminary in Philadelphia and had resentment from nuns and seminarians."

On the effects on women religious leaders of being in a sexual minority, a 52 year old nun said, "Makes some aggressive,

# NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-12-

others timid." A 75 year old nun who had said that women need to excel "because of Women's Lib. They would have to strive to make their goal so as to impress their opponents," added that being a sexual minority would make women religious leaders "feel out of place." A 58 year old nun answered, "tough barrier." A 29 year old brother said, "If they are exposed to many negative vibrations from males. I'm sure it can be rather difficult. Like any pioneers, they have and will have many challenges." A brother, 56, said, "They feel inferior and that they must excel." Another brother, 41, said, "Creates more pressure on women; they must face negative reaction to them in their (leadership) positions." A 34 year old brother responding to women's need to excel by stating, "Since I studied for 10 years in the seminary with an all male environment, it is difficult to respond because of the lack of experience," answered the item about sexual minority by saying, "Based on thought, I would think (the effect to be) one of competition."

On the question of what pressures women might feel who are in high levels of leadership, a nun, 52, verbalized, "Pressure to justify positions on church, community, theology, global issues." A nun, 58, said, "A great deal of pressure. Men in top church leadership feel women are not as capable." A brother, 34, indicated, "Competition, intellectual inferiority" as the pressures. A brother, 41, said, "Yes, there is pressure, but by the time they have reached 'very high levels' they handle it well." Another brother, 56, answered, "The same pressures as men do who are in high leadership roles, i. e., the pressure of the job with all its details."

## NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-13-

On how women experience stress from institutional and personal pressure in their work, a 52 year old nun said, "Just by the attitude from many church leaders (male) that we don't belong in positions of leadership and decision-making---Just do your 'slave' labor and be grateful that we let you do it! A 65 year old nun said, "By not having enough time to finish tasks, etc." A nun, 75, wrote, "Being able to cope with the grace of God." A 58 year old nun wrote, "We are good here at St. J\_\_\_\_'s." A brother, 34, said, "They feel they must be on top of everything." Another brother, 41, wrote, "Not as well as men, in my experience."

On how women handle work-related stress, a nun, 52, said, "Time for prayer, reflection, solitude daily. Time with outside support group frequently." A nun, 58, related, "Prayer, relaxation, sharing." For a 65 year old nun, the answer was, "Discuss the problem with others when feasible. By prayer." A nun, 75, responded, "'Press on bravely, never mind the scratches even when it comes from human nails.'" A brother, 41, said, "As well as men, in my experience."

For the question of whether women handle stress differently than their male counterparts, a nun, 52, related, "Yes, but again, because I feel women in general view life, work, success as more personal and subjective than men." A nun, 75, said, "I think so because of her nature which God has given her." A nun, 65, said, "Yes, they are not as volatile (as a rule)." Another nun, 58, responded, "Sometimes. Depends on the individual. Men many times go to bars with the boys." A 35 year old nun noted, "I think that men are quicker to take time off than women." A nun, 61, commented, "Yes, women are usually

more sensitive and wish to please. Women might become quiet or restrained or analyze the situation. Men respond with a quick answer or remark or look of annoyance." A brother, 44, said, "Oftentimes women will take stress more personally and respond to it from that aspect. Perhaps the response carries a reaction leading to the intuitive rather than the sensate." A 56 year old brother said, "Yes. I don't really know, but they do not seem to need as much physical exercise." A brother, 29, noted, "I'm sure women experience more, but I am not sure how they handle it." Another brother, 41, simply wrote, "Women tend to show stress more." A 34 year old brother commented, "Yes, at times they are more irritable. They hold on to too many hurts."

On using inclusive language in texts and hymnals in church, a brother, 34, said, "I'm okay with it, provided it flows and makes sense." A brother, 41, commented, "Great idea, actively supported and implemented by me." Another brother, 29, said, "Sexist language should be eliminated." A brother, 56, noted, "It would be a good idea." A nun, 52, verbalized, "I feel that it's a matter of justice to work toward this." Another nun, 58, wrote, "I'm not hung up about it." A 65 year old nun said, "No problem as we are all children of God." A nun, 75, answered, "Irrelevant."

As to whether they planned to use more inclusive language for men and women in their religious setting, a 75 year old nun replied that this was "not applicable" to her. A nun, 58, said, "It's okay with me, no big thing!!" Another nun, 52, noted, "I do already---though some---even women---object."

NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-15-

A brother, 41, indicated, "Yes, language helps to share our mentality."

For the item on whether there were any changes in language that was particularly offensive to them, a 75 year old nun noted, "Use of profanity (i. e., damn, Holy name, bastard) which formerly was not in use in print." A brother, 41, commented, "Some changes are still awkward to our ears." Another brother, 34, said, "Yes, when God is referred to as 'she' or 'her.'" A 29 year old brother wrote, "The image of God as 'father' is very important to me. Maybe it shouldn't be."

On whether they thought and felt that women religious leaders and congregants should use their birth names, a nun, 58, noted, "If it makes them more whole, do it. It's how we act, not what we're called that matters to me." A nun, 65, wrote that "It is a personal matter for each person." A nun, 58, commented, "Whatever they feel comfortable with should be encouraged." A brother, 41, also noted, "Doesn't bother me. It's a personal choice." A nun, 68, replied, "I would prefer the use of their marriage names."

As to whether women would prefer to use their birth names, a nun, 58, said, "I still have my **religious** name." A nun, 65, wrote, "No, not really, at my age." Another nun, 52, noted, "I do already."

As to whether their religious setting is accepting of women using their birth names, a nun, 52, answered, "My religious community has encouraged this since 1963." Another nun, 65, said, "It's optional."

As can be seen, many of these nuns and brothers responded

to the needs of women and the stresses which women experience, as well as to their own stresses concerning women and their problems, with keen sensitivity. However, some of them have excused themselves from being more aware of these matters because they have dwelled in a religious community with their own gender. To their credit, some even made extra effort to understand the opposite gender. Because both sisters and brothers will influence many young and old people during their lives, their noncommitment to understanding some of the most important gender issues of our day is inexcusable. They may have found this area highly stressful and used a plausible excuse for not dealing at all or effectively with these concerns. Their lack of knowledge, or even worse, their negative attitudes towards the opposite gender, will not enhance the wholeness of those with whom they have the most contact in their own work and community settings.

Because nuns and brothers may do pastoral and other counseling with others on their jobs, they could well benefit from occasional individual and group psychotherapy or counseling sessions of their own to release stress from the job and from their community "fish bowl" living. A support group which is outside their community would also be helpful. Consulting with specialists in pastoral psychotherapy and women's studies would be very meaningful for most of these religious leaders. Virkler (1979, 1980) has noted that seminaries often do not have adequate programs in pastoral counseling and psychology. Specialized instruction and workshops would help to fill the gaps in this regard. Materials which have been developed to

NUNS, BROTHERS, AND THE RELIGION AND STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

-17-

enhance awareness of the needs of women and men in religious leadership roles could be collected in booklets for nuns and brothers to discuss at workshops. Such articles would advance the understanding of stresses concerning the genders and to pass on better attitudes to males and females (Hardesty, 1979; Rayburn, 1981, 1985a, b).

REFERENCES

- Hardesty, N. (1979). *Women and the seminaries*. Christian Century, 96, 122-123.
- Rayburn, C. A. (1981). Some reflections of a female seminarian: Woman, whither goest thou? Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 16 (2), 61-65.
- Rayburn, C. A. (1985a). Impact of nonsexist language and guidelines for women in religion. Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 20 (1), in press.
- Rayburn, C. A. (1985b). Promoting equality for women seminarians. Counseling and Values, 29 (2), 164-169.
- Rayburn, C. A., Richmond, L. J., & Rogers, L. (1983). Stress among religious leaders. Thought: Fordham University Quarterly Review, 58 (230), 329-344.
- Rayburn, C. A., Richmond, L. J., & Rogers, L. (1982). Women, men, and religion: Stress within sanctuary walls. Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 17 (1), 75-83.
- Rayburn, C. A., Richmond, L. J., & Rogers, L. (1986). Men, women, and religion: Stress within leadership roles. Journal of Clinical Psychology, in press.
- Virkler, H. A. (1979). Counseling demands, procedures, and preparation of parish ministers: A descriptive study. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 7 (4), 271-280.
- Virkler, H. A. (1980). The facilitativeness of parish ministers: A descriptive study. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 8 (2), 140-146.